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ABSTRACT

Ways to identify possible funding sources for educational institutions are described and steps involved in drafting a proposal are enumerated. It is shown that the first step in proposal writing is to match funding needs with appropriate granting agencies, often using the assistance of offices for research and development or colleagues who have received funding. References that contain information on grant programs are listed and described, along with agencies that fund teaching and learning projects or related programs, or which provide information on federal and foundation funding programs. Proposal drafting steps include assessing capabilities to accomplish requirements of the project, obtaining commitments of support and cooperation for the project, and contacting the funding agency to determine funding possibilities. The types of information required in most proposals are described, and agencies that may be contacted for funding information are listed, as are guides for proposal writing and fund raising. (SW)

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HOW TO PLAN AND DRAFT FEDERAL AND PRIVATE FUNDING REQUESTS

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HOW TO PLAN AND DRAFT FEDERAL AND PRIVATE FUNDING REQUESTS

Many educational institutions are seeking to increase their participation in Federal and private foundation programs for program development, research and training. Because of frequent changes in agency administrative procedures and personnel, it is often difficult to obtain the information needed to compete effectively for the funds. The purpose of this article is to help identify possible funding sources and to enumerate the steps involved in drafting a proposal.

FUNDING SOURCES

The first step in proposal writing is to match funding needs with appropriate granting agencies. There are usually a variety of sources on each campus for locating information about potential funding agencies. Many colleges and universities have an office of research and development which provides information on funding topics and agencies. If there is not a specific office of research and development, there may be a dean or other administrative officer charged with this responsibility. Generally, this office will have personnel to assist proposal writers with information about funding programs including the program emphasis, guidelines and deadlines. In addition, brochures with general information on proposal writing, sample proposals, lists of those who have receive grants, grant application forms and other resources are usually available in this office.

If there is no designated office of research and development on campus, it may be helpful to seek the advice of colleagues who have received funding. These persons may be able to offer assistance by sharing successful proposals, by listing funding sources, by providing agency contacts and by reviewing the potential proposal.

Campus and public libraries have references which contain information on public and private grant programs and contract opportunities:

1. Federal Register is a government publication which describes regulations and legal notices issued by Federal agencies. It includes funding programs of government agencies including a summary of the program, the rules and regulations, the purpose, dates and persons to whom comments and questions may be addressed. It is published daily Monday through Friday except legal holidays.

2. Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations House of Representative is a congressional record of the trancript of hearings regarding specific governmental departments. There is a separate publication for the hearings of each department. Each record is published once per year and is free upon request. The information includes past funded projects, percentages of funded projects, and projections for future funding.

3. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance is a looseleaf reference basic edition collection containing the most current data available on the status of congressional action on program legislation. An update is published later in the year. Detailed program descriptions include information on eligibility, the application and award process, requirements, guidelines, dates, contacts and the range of financial assistance available.

4. The Annual Register of Grant Support lists more than 2,000 grant-supporting organizations with complete program descriptions detailing the type, purpose and duration of the grant, funding available, eligigility requirements, the organizations's area of interest, and other pertinent infomation.

5. Commerce Business Daily is a daily newspaper with a section entitled "Requests for Proposals" where agencies solicit work in specific subject areas.

6. The Founcation Directory describes private funding sources for institutions and individuals. Information regarding over 5,000 foundations listed by state and city describes the interests of the foundation, eligibility, amount of awards, and contact persons.

7. The Foundation Grants Index which includes grants of $10,000 or more is a cumulative index which guides readers to grants in their fields of interest as well as to the geographic region of each granting foundation.

There are a number of agencies particularly interested in funding projects related to teaching and learning in higher education and adult basic education. These offices prepare program guides which list all grant programs and contract opportunities for the forthcoming year. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) has offices and divisions which sponsor grant competitions each year, among them the Office of Education and the Education Division. The Office of Education focuses on a variety of activities including basic skills improvement. The Education Division administers the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), which provides assistance through solicited grants or contracts to educational institution and agencies. The Office of Human Development Services awards grants to public or other nonprofit institutions of higher learning. The National Institute of Education (NIE) is mandated to support research which will improve the quality of education and will foster equality of educational opportunity.

Investigators may also wish to explore funding possibilities with other governmental offices which also support research and activities. The National Science Foundation (NSF) provides grant and contract support for research and education in the sciences. The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has a Division of Education Programs whose objective is the improvement of instruction in the disciplines of the humanities including the improvement of student writing ability within the context of the humanities.

Although the primary funding emphasis is not educational research, the following agencies have specific programs involving educational emphases: the National Institute of Mental Health, the Department of Labor, the National Institute of Justice, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Defense.

Many state colleges, land grant colleges and state universities are affiliated with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities which has an office of federal programs whose primary role is to serve as an information center linking campus representatives to Federal agency personnel. This office provides a source in Washington, D.C. from which participating institutions may obtain information and assistance concerning Federal and foundation programs.

STEPS INVOLVED IN DRAFTING A PROPOSAL

After locating the appropriate funding source whose emphasis is consistent with the identified program needs, the investigator should peruse the rules and regulations of the guidelines to determine the capabilities of the institution to accomplish the requirements of the project. Following this, a search of the literature should be conducted to determine the state of the art relative to the project goals. It is also important to determine how the proposed project will contribute to knowledge and research in the field.

Proposals must reflect a cooperative effort between the investigator and the administration of the institution; therefore, the investigator should apprise the appropriate administrators of program needs, funding opportunities and feasability of institutional support. It is essential to receive administrative backing before proceeding. Furthermore, administrative personnel may have advice and information that may improve the proposal.

Projects which propose to involve community facilities and persons require the investigator to canvas community agencies and leaders to obtain commitments of support and cooperation with the project.

Investigators should consult with faculty from affected disciplines for projects with interdisciplinary aspects. In some instances, investigators may wish to utilize these colleagues as project consultants.

An important step not to be overlooked is the need to consult with staff members of the funding agency in order to describe the nature and scope of the proposal. Investigators can determine whether there is a need to redirect the focus of the project, can obtain the budgetary range which will be available, and can receive specific advice on the format and organization of the proposal draft. At this time, it is possible to determine definitely whether the proposal is within the priority interest of the agency. If the agency selected is not the appropriate funding source, it is helpful to make that determination before expending additional efforts and time. However, other agencies should be contacted until an optional funding source is located. Recognizing that direct personal contact is the best way to obtain accurate and specific information about funding possibilities, some institutions have grants-in-aid available for this type of travel.

If it is not possible to visit potential funding offices, contact may be made by letter or telephone. The letter or phone contact should be used to briefly outline the proposed project and the need for the project, to state the objectives of the project and to set forth the means of achieving the objectives. If a letter is sent, it should be limited to two pages. A one-page vita highlighting the background of the investigator as it relates to the project should request an indication of the degree of interest in the proposed project and how the project could be adjusted to meet the funding agency's priorities.

Upon completing agency contacts and selecting a potential funding source, the investigator should formulate an outline of the information to be contained

in the various elements of the project. The outline should follow the organization required in the agency's guidelines, if they are available. Occasonally, an investigator needs to begin drafting a proposal before the guidelines are published. And, in some cases, no guidelines are available. The information described below is usually required in most proposals:

1. Project Title. This should fully describe the proposed project but be limited to as few words as possible. The words "project" and "proposal" should not be included in the title.

2. Abstract. The abstract should be limited to 200 to 250 words. The significance of the project, what is to be accomplished, how it is to be done, and the time frame of the project should be stated concisely. The abstract helps to capture attention and creates the first impression of the proposal.

3. Table of Contents. All major sections and specific locations should be included in the table of contents. Where several sets of regulations must be followed, as in the case of the Education Division General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) and the program regulations, it is helpful to list each regulation in the table of contents and to specify the page or pages where the regulation is addressed.

4. Narrative or Descriptive of the Proposed Project. This part is frequently written as a statement of need emphasizing the importance of the project locally and nationally. The need or problem should be somewhat narrow in scope and have attainable goals. The research in the field should be summarized and should be used to support the need for the proposed project. The relationship of the project to the interests and goals of the potential funding agency should be emphasized. The introduction sets forth the major focus of the proposal.

5. Goals. The goals of the project should be generalized statement(s) about the anticipated accomplishments of the project.

6. Objectives. Statements concerning project objectives should be precise. The objectives should have measurable outcomes, should be clearly defined and should be realistic in terms of budget and time frame.

7. Implications of the Project. This part of the program description should highlight the reason why this project is being proposed and its value to the project population and the state of the art. The key words are results and impact: What is expected to be accomplished and what implications the results will have on the field.

8. Procedures of Project Design. This is the section of the proposal which describes how the objectives will be accomplished. It is important to be specific and to describe in detail what is to be done (program activity), by whom (personnel), to whom (target population), when (time frame) and how long (time span). In some proposals it is useful to list specific activities and the equipment and materials needed for the activity with their relevant objectives.

If the procedures section is unduly lengthy or restricted by the agency, the use of appendices can aid in the reduction of this section.

The time frame for the project may be included in this section or in a separate section with its own heading. The investigator should set forth the sequence and timing for each part of the project including the evaluation, preparation of final report and dissemination of results.

9. Evaluation. A concise description of the evaluation design is important, particularly in educational proposals. The main goal of evaluation is to provide information as to whether the project accomplished its goals.

10. Dissemination. In projects where dissemination of project results is required, the investigator should take care to include a report to the agency among the list of means of dissemination. Published papers, workshops, a project newsletter, production of audiovisual materials and speeches are some of the ways project results can be shared.

11. Literature Review. Although the literature is summarized in the introduction, it should be more fully described in a separate section of the proposal. Projects and investigations which provide background for or support the proposed project should be briefly described. If the investigator has participated in similar prior investigations, these should be noted.

The list of references should be as current as possible, citing the most recent advances in the field.

12. Equipment and Facilities. Investigators should describe the equipment essential for the project: items which will be made available to the project by the institution and items which must be purchased for the project. Generally, proposals for educational activities should be designed to utilize existing facilities at the institution or in the community.

13. Personnel. It is important to carefully estimate personnel requirements. Vitae which highlight experience and publications relative to the focus of the proposal should be included.

14. Budget. The investigator must provide estimates of all direct costs including salaries, wages, fringe benefits, consultant fees, travel, supplies, equipment, services, and facilities. Many institutions have a fixed percentage to cover the indirect costs involved. However, in some cases, indirect costs may be negotiated between the institution and the sponsoring agency.

It is important to consult on budget matters with the campus office of research or the financial officer responsible for institutional proposals before figuring fringe benefits and indirect costs. It is also helpful to consult with colleagues who have been funded by the potential sponsoring agency to determine their budget experience with the agency.

It is not advisable to over or underinflate budget figures. Most agencies will accept proposed figures as accurate and necessary expenses for the project. Agencies have known to call and negotiate on budget matters when they are interested in a project but cannot fund it at the proposed level of financing.

15. Appendices. When a sponsor limits the length of the proposal to be a specified number of pages, the appendices can be useful for the inclusion of data of peripheral benefit to the proposal. Letters of support, article reprints, tables and graphs may be included.

CONCLUSION

When the proposal is complete and ready for mailing, the investigator should be certain required forms accompany the proposal draft. Forms required by the funding agency are usually included in the application package. There also may be special institutional forms which need to be signed and included. It would also be helpful to have personnel of the research office or a previously-funded colleague proof-read the proposal before mailing.

If the proposal should not be funded the investigator should request reviewer's comments and information regarding resubmission.

By no means have we covered the breadth of the topic, but we hope you will find what you need in what we have covered or in the resources cited.

Appendix

Funding Information Sources

American Association of State Colleges and Universities
One Dupont Circle, N.W.
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036

Annual Register of Grant Support
Published annually by Academic Media
Division of Computing and Software
32 Lincoln Avenue
Orange, New Jersey 07050

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
Published by Office of Management and Budget
Available from:
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402 or your local Federal bookstore

Commerce Business Daily
The Commerce Department
United States Government
Washington, D.C. 20230

Federal Register
Published by the Office of the Federal Register
Available from:
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

Federal Assistance for Postsecondary Education
Published by the Congressional Budget Office
Available from:
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

The Foundation Center
1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

The Foundation Directory
Columbia University Press
136 S. Broadway
Irvington, New York 100533

Foundation Grants Index
Columbia University Press
136 South Broadway
Irvington, New York 10533

Foundation News
Published by Council on Foundation, Inc.
588 Seventh Avenue
New York, New York 10019

The Grantsmanship Center News
The Grantsmanship Center
7815 South Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90044

Hearings before a Subcommittee of the
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

Funding Agencies

Department of Health, Education and Welfare
Office of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202

Department of Health, Education and Welfare
Fund For the Improvement of Postsecondary Education
400 Maryland Avenue S.W.
Rm. 2123
Washington, D.C. 20208

National Institute of Education
Department of Health, Education of Welfare
Washington, D.C. 20208

Department of Health, Education and Welfare
Office of Human Development Services
Grants Management Division/OAM
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Rm. 345 F4
Washington, D.C. 20201

National Science Foundation
Washington, D.C. 20250

National Endowment for the Humanities
Washington, D.C. 20256

Proposal Assistance

The Bread Game: The Realities of Foundation Fund Raising
Available from:
Glide Publications
330 Ellis Street
San Francisco, California 94102

A Comprehensive Guide to Succesful Grantsmanship
The Grant Development Institute
2552 Ridge Road
Littleton, Colorado 80120

Developing Skills in Proposal Writing
by Mary Hall
Continuing Education Pubications
Office of Federal Relations
Extension Hall Annex
University Campus
Corvallis, Oregon 97331

Grantsmanship, Money and How to Get It
Academic Media
32 Lincoln Avenue
Orange, New Jersey 07050

How to Write Successful Foundation Presentations
by Joseph Dermer
Public Services Materials Center
104 East 40th Street
New York, New York 10016

Hot to Get Your Fair Share of Foundation Grants
by Joseph Dermer
New York Public Service Materials Center
104 East 40th Street
New York, New York 10016

Program Planning and Proposal Writing
Available from:
Grantsmanship Center
1015 West Olympic Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 09915

Proposal Development Handbook
Available from:
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
Suite 700
One Dupont Circle
Washington, D.C. 20036

Seeking Foundations Funds
by David M. Church
National Public Relations Council
815 Second Avenue
New York, New York 10017